

**KINGSBRIDGE
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

REPORT
on the
HEALTH OF THE AREA
for the Year 1972

Presented by
The Medical Officer of Health and
Public Health Inspector



Kingsbridge Urban District Council

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**Public Health matters are dealt with by the Public Health
and Highways Committee**

Report on the Health of the District for the Year 1972

PREFACE

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I present herewith the Annual Report of the health of the district during 1972, drawn up on the lines of Department of Health and Social Security Circular 1/73 dated January 1973. Included in the Report is the Report of your Public Health Inspector.

From a Public Health viewpoint the year passed quietly with no call for special comment.

I wish to thank members of the Council and staff for their help and co-operation during the year.

JOHN WILDMAN,

Medical Officer of Health.

November 1973.

SECTION A

VITAL STATISTICS AND GENERAL STATISTICS 1972

Table 1

Figures for 1971 are shown in brackets

POPULATION :

Estimated Mid-Year Population of Kingsbridge Urban District

	(3,540)	3,530	
Natural increase or decrease	(-5)		-28
Migration in or out.....	(+25)		+18
Total increase or decrease.....	(+20)		-10

GENERAL STATISTICS :

Area of Kingsbridge Urban District in Acres

1,148

Number of Inhabited Houses according to the Rate Books

	(1,270)	1,314	
Number of Houses per acre.....	(1.106)		1.145
Number of Persons per acre.....	(3.083)		3.075
Number of Persons per house	(2.787)		2.686
Dwellings owned by the Council			369

Rateable Value of District at 1st April

(£151,837) £157,530

Sum Represented by a New Penny Rate

(£1,451) £1,487

Table 2
Figures for 1971 are shown in brackets

BIRTHS :

Standardised Live Birth Rate per 1,000 population	(12.9)	7.8
Area Comparability Factor for Births.....	(1.17)	1.33

Number of Live Births :	Males	Females	Total
Total	9	12	21
Legitimate	8	12	20
Illegitimate	1	0	1
Number of Still Births	0	0	0

DEATHS :

Standardised Death Rate per 1,000 population.....	(11.0)	10.8
Area Comparability Factor for Deaths.....	(0.89)	0.78

Number of Deaths :	Males	Females	Total
All ages – Total	29	20	49
Deaths of Infants under 1 year	0	0	0
Number under 4 weeks of age	0	0	0
Number under 1 week of age	0	0	0

Infantile Mortality Rate per 1,000 Live Births.....	(26.0)	0.0
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Comparisons with Rates for England and Wales

Birth Rate	(16.0)	14.8	Death Rate	(11.6)	12.1
Infantile Mortality Rate	(18.0)	17.0			
(Infants under 1 year of age)					

CAUSES OF DEATH DURING 1972

		All ages		
		M.	F.	Total
B6(2)	Other Tuberculosis	1	0	1
B19(3)	Malignant Neoplasm, Stomach	2	1	3
B19(6)	Malignant Neoplasm, Lung, Bronchus	1	0	1
B19(7)	Malignant Neoplasm, Breast	0	2	2
B21	Diabetes Mellitus	1	0	1
B46(1)	Other Endocrine etc. Diseases.....	1	0	1
B28	Ischaemic Heart Disease.....	7	1	8
B29	Other Forms of Heart Disease.....	2	2	4
B30	Cerebrovascular Disease.....	6	3	9
B46(6)	Other Diseases of Circulatory System.....	2	1	3
B32	Pneumonia.....	3	5	8
B33(2)	Asthma	0	1	1
B46(7)	Other Diseases of Respiratory System	0	2	2
B34	Peptic Ulcer	1	0	1
B46(8)	Other Diseases of Digestive System.....	0	1	1
BE47	Motor Vehicle Accidents	1	0	1
BE49	Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injuries.....	1	1	2

TOTAL ALL CAUSES.....	29	20	49
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PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES

Table 1

Disease	Age group in years						Over 65
	Total	Under 1	1- 5	5- 15	15- 25	25- 65	
Tuberculosis (Non-Respiratory)	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

Table 2

Incidence by Quarters

Disease	Total	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Tuberculosis Non-Respiratory)	1	0	0	1	0

NATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACTS 1948 and 1951

No action was necessary under the National Assistance Acts of 1948 and 1951 for the removal of persons in need of care and attention and no persons were buried in accordance with Section 50 of the 1948 Act.

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES

1. Hospitals.

A General Practitioner Hospital with 13 beds is situated at Kingsbridge. Other hospitals which serve the district are at Plymouth and Totnes.

2. County Council Health Services.

Under the National Health Services Act 1946, the Devon County Council provides the following services :-

Domiciliary midwives, home nurses, health visitors, supervisory care of expectant and nursing mothers and children under five, ambulance services, vaccination and immunisation procedures, chiropody.

Full details can be obtained from the County Medical Officer at Exeter.

3. Social Services (Devon County Council).

The Area Director of Social Services at The Family Welfare Centre, Bridgetown, Totnes (Tel. Totnes 3665), is responsible for providing a Social Work Service under the Children's Acts, The Mental Health Act 1959 and the National Assistance Acts, to the elderly, the mentally ill, the physically handicapped and homeless persons and families. The Social Services Department also administers the Home Help Service, the Social Work Service to Schools, the Occupational Therapy Services and Residential Homes and Centres.

4. Laboratory Service.

Bacteriological examinations of pathological specimens and samples of milk, water and ice cream are carried out at the Public Health Laboratory at Plymouth. The chemical analysis of water is undertaken by public analysts at Exeter, and also by the South West Devon Water Board.

5. Medical and Dental Services.

There are four general medical practitioners and three dentists in the town.

6. Mass Miniature Radiography.

A Mass X-Ray Unit visits the town regularly once a fortnight and members of the public are encouraged to attend for a chest X-ray.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Report of the Public Health Inspector

The preparatory work for local government reorganisation got well underway during 1972 and in common with all the local government professions, my colleagues and I spent a lot of time gathering and collating information on the work done, techniques and methods used, statistical information, staffing etc. in the constituent authorities. As in Kingsbridge, most other officers carry out other duties in addition to their main appointment, and it has been interesting to see the effect of this.

One advantage we may expect from reorganisation is that officers having lost extraneous duties, should be able in future to concentrate on the job for which they were trained and carry out their work in depth rather than diversification. A better quality of work and service should be the result, although with the greater degree of specialisation, some work interest will inevitably be lost.

There is much to do before the new council takes over, and 1973 will be an even busier year.

Water Supply

No complaints were received during the year concerning the water supply which was satisfactory both in quality and quantity, as verified by the water samples submitted for analysis.

I am indebted to the Manager and Director of Water Supplies of the South West Devon Water Board for the following statistics.

Bacteriological Analyses 1972 South West Devon Water Board Area

	S.W.D.W.B.			Unsatis- factory
	P.H. Labs	Lab	Total	
Dec 71-Jan 72	157	—	157	4
Jan-Feb	112	—	112	2
Feb-Mar	152	—	152	nil
Mar-April	88	—	88	nil
April-May	148	—	148	nil
May-June	181	44	225	1
June-July	168	17	185	2
July-Sept	293	51	344	3
Sept-Oct	209	20	229	2
Oct-Nov	134	12	146	1
Nov-Dec	117	8	125	2
	1759	152	1911	17

Action under the Housing Acts in the form of improvements and clearance of unfit dwellings reduced the few remaining houses served by standpipe only.

Drainage and Sewerage

The main contract works for the new sewage disposal works were commenced during 1972 and proceeded well. These facilities are long overdue and when completed will relieve many of the difficulties encountered with the town's sewerage system.

The old drains and sewers of Kingsbridge were again troublesome and there was much serving of notices, clearing of obstructions and repairing. Owners should realise that the drains serving their premises are as much a

part of their property as the roof or paintwork and as such require regular attention and maintenance, unpleasant though this may seem. "Out of sight, out of mind and anyway it isn't very nice" seems to be the attitude towards the drains one owns and it often comes as a shock to people when they realise that they are responsible for this part of their property.

We may be relieved that the sewage works is now on the way but must look forward to systematically renewing many of the aged, deteriorated and inadequate drains and sewers.

Housing

The work of "weeding out" the worst of the town's unfit houses incapable of repair and improvement to modern standards continued.

Each year I have briefly described the worst dwelling found during that year. 1972's chief offender was a first floor flat over stores at the rear of a shop. The flat consisted of a bedroom, living room and small scullery. There was no gas or electric lighting installed, the tenant relying on paraffin appliances for lighting, cooking and heating, the fireplaces being unserviceable. There was no cooker installed in the flat and the tenant used paraffin heaters to warm food through. The premises were in very poor structural and decorative repair both internally and externally. Due to the use of the paraffin appliances the interior was uniformly discoloured with black soot deposits, except where rainwater had run through ceilings and down walls creating a streaked effect, an overall impression of dinginess prevailing. There were large areas of missing, loose and damp ceiling and wall plaster, the damp areas supporting mould growth. The whole place was in a generally poor state of repair, the roof leaking badly. All the windows were in such poor repair none of them were openable and most rotted out. Amenities available to the tenant were a small sink in the scullery with cold water supply only, and an outside toilet in the back garden.

The council has accepted an undertaking from the owner that the flat will not be re-let for human habitation when the tenant is rehoused, but while people are living in such awful conditions, we should not relax our efforts to provide alternative accommodation which largely governs our ability to rehouse.

A prosecution was taken against the owner of some cottages the subject of Demolition Orders, who let one of the cottages to holidaymakers in contravention of the Order. The owner was fined £10 and ordered to pay costs of £40.

The pace of improvements showed little sign of lessening and much good work was completed with the aid of grants. Some cottages suitable for restoration and improvement were completed to provide good modern homes of traditional appearance in keeping with the character of the town.

Again there was little interest shown by landlords for Qualification Certificates to obtain realistic rents from their houses. It seems that they are reluctant to carry out the necessary repairs and maintenance for the houses to qualify and the products of neglect caused by low controlled rents, remain unremedied. The council may wish to consider enforcement of repairs in these cases where informal methods fail.

There was a big increase in the number of complaints alleging disrepair, mainly in council houses. This is disappointing remembering the downward trend of the previous two years but is explained by the introduction of fair rents in April, under the Housing Finance Act 1972.

There was an upsurge in complaints of minor items of disrepair; even trivial items that previously tenants either tolerated or attended to themselves. It is reasonable to suppose this is a temporary phenomena and that a return to the decline in complaints may be expected this year.

Statutory notice was served on the owners of a house severely affected with dry rot fungal attack but due to leasehold and financial complications, the owners were unable to comply with the notice.

Practically all the structural timbers throughout the house (fortunately with the exception of the roof timbers) were affected, the worst example of dry rot decay I have seen, with dampness and disrepair contributing to the damage.

In such cases the Housing Act 1957 requires the local authority to have the work carried out and recover their expenses from the owners.

A contract was therefore prepared and advertised for tenders but none were received. The council then completed the work by direct labour with the aid of a specialist company to carry out damp proofing and eradicate the dry rot. The costs were then charged to the owners.

Number of complaints alleging house defects.....	331
Minor housing repairs dealt with	297
Notices served	12
Notices complied with	10
" Time and Place " Notices served	7
Demolition Orders served	2
Undertakings accepted	7
Undertakings completed.....	5
Applications for improvement grants.....	10
Applications refused	3
Improvement Grants completed	9

NUISANCES ETC.

Number of complaints received alleging nuisances	13
Other complaints.....	4
Notices served	8
Notices complied with	12
Other complaints remedied	4
Abandoned cars dealt with under the Civic Amenities Act, 1967	11

Mr W Peck, who for so many years ably and conscientiously carried out the duties of pest control for the council, retired in 1972 and received our grateful recognition of his services. Arrangements were made with K.R.D.C. to share the services of their pest control staff and the work is being continued satisfactorily, a small step towards reorganisation.

Feral pigeons caused some difficulties in the centre of the town and Rentokil were employed to use specialist techniques to reduce their numbers but otherwise no insurmountable difficulties were encountered.

A few feral cat infestations were dealt with by way of advice and with the help of the R.S.P.C.A.

FOOD

I am pleased to report a continuing trend for improvement in the town's food premises and I hope more people will use their local Public Health Inspector for the advice and help he can give rather than wait for contraventions of the hygiene regulations to be pointed out during routine inspections. Often some unwise purchases of unsuitable equipment, shop fitting and food handling techniques can be thus avoided.

A prosecution was taken against the operator of an ice-cream van which on inspection was found to be dirty and have inoperable washing facilities. Altogether five contraventions were proceeded on and the operator

was fined £3 on each one and ordered to pay £5 costs. The council's legal expenses amounted to £38.50 apart from the work and time involved of their own staff.

One point emphasised by our solicitor during the case was that unlike a food shop which is easily traced and kept under surveillance a mobile food shop and especially ice-cream vans, can disperse a food poisoning outbreak over a very wide area in a short space of time and be extremely difficult, if not impossible to trace. For this reason it is essential for a constant vigilance to be maintained and ensure that food hygiene standards are met.

The maximum fine permitted under the Regulations on each contravention is £100 and/or 3 months imprisonment which is some measure of the importance the Government attaches to food hygiene but it seems considered of no great moment locally. Probably an irresponsible operator could sustain such a fine weekly and still show a profit.

Following is a list of food premises grouped as far as possible into principal trades :-

Supermarkets/Grocers	13
Butchers.....	4
Bakers/Confectioners	9
Wet and Fried Fish Shops (1 mobile).....	4
Greengrocers	4
Restaurants and Cafes.....	11
Public Houses.....	9

In addition to the above there were various ice-cream and mobile food vendors operating in the town.

Number of food premises registered under Section 16 of the Food and Drugs Act 1955 :-

Manufacture and storage of ice-creams for sale.....	17
Preparation or manufacture of sausages etc.....	8
Dairies registered under the Milk and Dairies Regulations	15
Notices served	12
Notices complied with	10

The total weight of food condemned as a result of voluntary surrender was 984 lbs consisting mainly of damaged and defective canned products, frozen food and wholesale meat joints, a small but welcome decrease in the previous year's total.

Further work was carried out on behalf of the Kingsbridge and Salcombe Port Health Authority in connection with the cleansing of shell fish gathered in the estuary and samples were regularly submitted for laboratory examination.

Meat Inspection

Use of the slaughterhouse declined during 1972 while problems of management, responsibility and expense incurred in keeping it up to standard recurred.

There was a big decrease in the incidence of disease in cattle slaughtered but an increase among sheep and lambs of minor parasitic infestations. These fluinations are not unusual and are affected by such variables as the weather, state of nutrition and overstocking, although more could be done by farmers by way of regular and well timed drenching which would particularly reduce loss of livers.

	Cattle Excluding Cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs	Horses
Number killed	30	—	1	745	—	—
Number inspected	30	—	1	745	—	—
All disease except Tuberculosis and Cysticerci						
Whole carcasses con- demned	—	—	—	1	—	—
Carcasses of which some part or organ was condemned	8	—	—	84	—	—
Percentages of the num- ber inspected affected with disease etc	26.67%	—	—	11.3%	—	—
Tuberculosis only :			Nil			
Cysticercosis :	1	—	—	—	—	—

Offices and Shops

One of the most frequent contraventions of the Act found in Kingsbridge is the failure of employers during the winter months to achieve the minimum permissible temperature in workrooms of 16°C. This is a low standard which should easily be met but it is by no means unusual to find much lower temperatures in shops and less frequently offices. If informal methods fail to improve this situation the council may in future have to consider taking enforcement action.

New registrations during 1972	9
Informal notices served	1
Informal notices complied with	1

FACTORIES ACT, 1961

PREScribed PARTICULARS OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE FACTORIES ACT, 1961

Part 1 of the Act

1. INSPECTIONS for the purpose of provision as to health (including inspections made by the Public Health Inspector)

Premises	Number in Register	Inspections	Number of Written Notices	Occupiers Prosecuted
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	—	—	—	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	40	4	1	—
(iii) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding outworkers' premises)	—	—	—	—
Total	40	4	—	—

2. Cases in which defects were found : NIL.

Part VIII of the Act
OUTWORK
There are no outworkers.

